

# Funding & Service Delivery Strategy

## North East Community Forests / Countryside Agency

### Brief

NECF and the Countryside Agency's North East region commissioned BE Group to undertake a funding and service delivery study to address the impact of the loss of DEFRA core funding from April 2007.

NECF is the strategic planning and delivery partner for the two community forest projects of the Great North Forest and The Tees Forest.

BE Group's role was to:

- Match 'actual' and 'planned' NECF activities against local authority service areas
- Identify areas where NECF could help to improve local authority performance and keep service cost levels down
- Undertake a comparative analysis against the local authorities corporate plans highlighting areas of 'match'
- Provide a case for additional funding support.

### Activities

- Desk research, telephone interviews and face-to-face meetings to gather background information
- Consultations with NECF employees and local authority partners, and key regional organisations
- Comparative analysis undertaken of activities against corporate plans and community strategies for the eleven local authority partners
- Facilitated away-day for project officers, addressing current and potential activity, future direction and marketing.



### Outcome

NECF has the potential to assume a championing role to gain commitment to the environmental economy, which is a social and economic driver for the North East.

It could also take the lead in realigning the Regional Forest Strategy to local authorities' strategic objectives, and promote the value of the equestrian sector to the regional economy.

Recommendations were made to improve reporting procedures and content, to focus more on the needs of partners. NECF should carry out a mid-term evaluation of its five year plan, using the findings to raise its profile.

The strategic alliance with Groundwork should be further developed, with joint marketing to reduce costs and demonstrate how the two organisations, complement each other.



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